

4.10 FORESTRY RESOURCES

INTRODUCTION

This section describes the impacts on commercial forest resources associated with development under the Draft General Plan.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Information regarding the types of forest resources and management methods is presented in Chapter 7.8, Natural Resources, Forestry and Timber Resources, in the *General Plan Background Report (Background Report)*. Chapter 7.8 of the *Background Report* is hereby incorporated by reference and summarized below.

Timber lands are defined as land available for timber production and capable of growing at least 20 cubic feet of industrial quality wood per acre per year. Almost all of the timberlands in Fresno County lie within the southern part of the Sierra National Forest and the northern portion of the Sequoia National Forest. The National Forest system falls within the jurisdiction of the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) under the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The boundaries of the Sierra National Forest include portions of Fresno, Inyo, Madera, Mariposa, and Mono counties. The boundaries of the Sequoia National Forest include portions of Fresno, Kings, Tulare, and Inyo counties. Chapter 1, Land Use and Population, details the acreage of both the public and private land holdings within each forest. Approximately 17,000 acres in the County have been zoned as Timberland Preserve Zone. There is no timber production in the incorporated communities in the East Valley or West Valley.

Annual yields within the Sierra National Forest have averaged approximately 88 million board feet but have scaled down to approximately 40 million board feet in recent years. The reduction in acreage available for logging is partially a result of recent endangered species regulations pertaining to the California spotted owl and the red-legged frog requiring immediate land set asides to preserve suitable habitat for these species. It is expected that yields will remain at the 40 million board foot level for the next several years. Timber from the Sierra, Sequoia, and other adjacent National Forests is the only long-term supply for the local wood products industry. The Sierra National Forest supplies 20 to 25 percent of the lumber manufactured in the San Joaquin Valley.

REGULATORY SETTING

Timber production in the Sierra and Sequoia National Forests is governed by federal regulations administered by the USFS and through resource management plans established for each forest. The role of local government is limited with respect to projects, planning, and management of lands within the jurisdiction of the U.S. Forest Service. If a Proposed Project on National Forest land is determined to be incompatible with the direction of an adopted Forest Plan, the project will be revised or not permitted. Conflicts that recur will result in a review of the relevant management direction of the Forest Plan according to its monitoring and evaluation process, and may lead to an amendment or revision to the Forest Plan. Projects on private lands that could affect USFS land "downstream" of the project would be evaluated by the USFS for cumulative or indirect impacts on federal lands.

Private timberlands in California are governed by the Forest Taxation Reform Act of 1976. The Act created the Timberland Production Zone (TPZ) to preserve forest lands from encroachment by other incompatible land uses. The Act identifies five compatible uses: management for watershed, management for fish and wildlife, or hunting and fishing; uses related to the growing, harvesting, processing of forest products; construction, alteration, or maintenance of utility facilities; and grazing. Residential use is discouraged, but allowed, by approval of a special use permit. Timber harvests on private lands not located within a TPZ are required to submit and obtain approval of a Timber Harvest Plan from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF).

The Fresno County Zoning Ordinance provides for a Timberland Preserve Zone designation, which differs from the federal TPZ. Section 814 of the Zoning Ordinance provides that the TPZ is intended to be an exclusive district for the growing and harvesting of timber and for uses that are an integral part of a timber management operation. Residential, commercial, and non-timber-related industrial uses and services to support those land uses and services to support those land uses are expressly prohibited in the TPZ. Section 814.5 requires a minimum lot area of 40 contiguous acres under a single ownership.

PLAN ELEMENTS

Development under the Draft General Plan would result in residential, commercial, industrial, and public uses being constructed in areas where forestry resources are present. The Draft General Plan contains the following policies that address forestry resources:

Policy OS-B.1	The County shall encourage the sustained productive use of forest land as a means of providing open space and conserving natural resources.
Policy OS-B.2	The County shall work closely with agencies involved in the management of forest ecosystems and shall coordinate with State and Federal agencies, private landowners, and private preservation/conservation groups in habitat preservation and protection of rare, endangered, threatened, and special concern species, to ensure consistency in efforts and to encourage joint planning and development of areas to be preserved. The County shall encourage State and Federal agencies to give notice to and coordinate with the County on any pending, contemplated, or proposed actions affecting local communities and citizens of the County. The County will encourage State and Federal agencies to address adverse impacts on citizens and communities of Fresno County, including environmental, health, safety, private property, and economic impacts.
Policy OS-B.3	The County shall coordinate with agencies involved in the regulation of timber harvest operations to ensure that County conservation goals are achieved.
Policy OS-B.4	The County shall review all proposed timber harvest plans and shall request that the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection and the U.S. Forest Service amend the plans to address public safety concerns, such as requiring alternate haul routes if use of proposed haul routes would jeopardize public safety or result in damage to public or private roads.
Policy OS-B.5	The County shall encourage and promote the productive use of wood waste generated in the County.
Policy OS-B.6	The County shall encourage and support conservation programs to reforest private timberlands.
Policy OS-B.7	The County shall protect forest resources for the production of timber resources and related activities.

Policy OS-B.8	The County shall discourage the development of land uses that conflict with timberland management.
Policy OS-B.9	The County shall encourage qualified landowners to enroll in the Timberland Production Zone program, pursuant to the Timberland Productivity Act of 1982.
Policy OS-B.10	The County shall maintain Timberland Production designations. Rezoning from the Timberland Production Zone District shall be based on criteria and procedures in accordance with the State Forest Taxation Reform Act and the Fresno County Zoning Ordinance.
Policy OS-B.11	The County shall require parcels removed from the Timberland Production Zone in accordance with the Fresno County Zoning Ordinance to revert to the Resource Conservation Zone District. Removal from the Timberland Production Zone District shall be effective ten (10) years from the date the rezoning is approved or as otherwise specified by the State Forest Taxation Reform Act.

IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Method of Analysis

The analysis of forest resources is a qualitative assessment of the effects of existing and potential operations near existing and potential areas of new urban development. The location of new growth in the County is assumed to be primarily in the Fresno-Clovis metropolitan area.

Standards of Significance

Impacts associated with forest resources are deemed significant if development under the Draft General Plan would result in:

- substantial conflicts between existing forestry operations and existing or newly developed land uses; or
- a substantial reduction of the availability in forestry resources in the County.

Impacts and Mitigation Measures

4.10-1 Development under the Draft General Plan could result in the conversion of private forest lands to non-forestry uses or create land use incompatibilities between timber operations and adjacent land uses.

Almost all of the timberlands in Fresno County lie within the southern part of the Sierra National Forest and the northern portion of the Sequoia National Forest. Land within a TPZ cannot be converted to a non-forestry use without a rezoning through the County and approval by the State Board of Forestry.

Almost all of the development under the Draft General Plan would occur in the incorporated areas of Fresno, Clovis, and smaller incorporated communities in the valley where timber crop production does not occur. Future growth with or without the project would increase the amount of land converted to developed uses in the unincorporated areas, including the foothills and mountains. The amount of land converted would be similar. If development were to occur on private forest lands in the

unincorporated areas within the foothills or mountains, Draft General Plan Policies OS-B.2 and OS-B.8 and the County's ordinance for TPZs would ensure that the production and harvesting of forest resources would not be affected within the production area. Policies OS-B.2 and OS-B.4 would help minimize the effects of traffic, noise, air quality, and other environmental effects on nearby residential or other non-forestry land uses. In addition, Draft General Plan Policies OS-B.1, OS-B.3, and OS-B.6 through OS-B.11 also provide direction for land use decisions regarding forestry resources. Therefore, impacts related to the conversion of private forest lands to non-forestry uses or land use incompatibilities would be ***less than significant***.

Mitigation Measures

4.10-1 *None required.*

4.10-2 Development under the Draft General Plan would increase the demand for timber resources.

Annual yields within the Sierra National Forest have averaged approximately 88 million board feet but have scaled down to approximately 40 million board feet in recent years. It is expected that yields will remain at the 40 million board foot level for the next several years. Timber from the Sierra, Sequoia, and other adjacent National Forests is the only long-term supply for the local wood products industry.

Future development in Fresno County with or without the Proposed Project would increase the demand for this renewable resource. The type and amount of forestry products consumed as part of development would not vary substantially, regardless of whether the products are used in unincorporated or incorporated areas. The availability of wood products to meet future demand is not limited to locally produced materials. Further, as described in Impact 4.10-1, above, implementation of the Proposed Project would not preclude access to or use of existing or future yields from National Forest lands in Fresno County. Further, General Plan policies OS-B.1 through OS-B.3, OS-B.5 through OS-B.7, and OS-B.9 through OS-B.11 encourage the sustained productive use of forest land. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not result in a substantial reduction in availability of forestry resources, and this impact is considered ***less than significant***.

Mitigation Measures

4.10-2 *None required.*

Cumulative Impacts

The cumulative context for forestry resources is development within the Sierra Nevada foothills and Sierra Nevada, primarily on forest lands, through the year 2020. Development in these areas could result in the conversion of private forest lands to non-forestry uses or create land use incompatibilities between timber operations and adjacent land uses within the region or contribute to an increase in demand for timber resources within the region.

4.10-3 The Proposed Project, in combination with cumulative development, could convert forest lands to non-forest uses, and/or create land use incompatibilities between timber operations and other land uses.

The Proposed Project by itself (i.e., the growth attributable directly to the Economic development Strategy and the Draft General Plan policies) represents a relatively small portion of the growth projected to occur in the county by 2020, because the population growth would be unchanged by the project. The difference between the project and not approving the project is the growth that would occur in the employment sector and the mix of employment and the patterns of development that would occur in the unincorporated area. Impacts 4.10-1 and 4.10-2, above, consider the effects of growth related directly to the project along with the growth that is projected to occur with or without project. Consequently, each impact addresses both cumulative (partially) and project-specific impacts.

For forestry, impacts would not be considered cumulatively significant because the pattern of development does not significantly encroach upon the forested areas. The commercial demand for timber products is market-driven, controlled in large part by the federal government, and the Proposed Project would not involve any actions that would directly affect the forestry industry. Because, there would not be a considerable contribution to cumulative impacts on forestry resources, the cumulative impact is considered ***less than significant***.

Mitigation Measures

4.10-3 *None required beyond Draft General Plan Policies OS-B.1 through OS-B.11.*